



# THE MAORI QUEEN OF CUISINE

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ANNE THORP COMBINES FOOD AND TELEVISION WITH MAORI CULTURE. LUNCH AT HER PLACE IS A MIX OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY FOOD SERVED TO AN ASSEMBLY OF FAVOURITE GUESTS WITH A GENEROUS SEASONING OF AROHA AND MANAAKI

THE CONCEPT OF MANAAKI, translated as hospitality or generosity, is central to Maori culture. It is this concept that Maori culinary entertainer Anne Thorp has attempted to capture in her cooking series *Kai Ora*. Originally produced for Maori Television by Anne's own company, Pakiri Productions, it has become the first New Zealand cooking show to air on the Sky Food channel.

Anne's unique cultural perspective is interwoven throughout the series. This allows her to blend her culinary prowess using fresh New Zealand produce with the personalities of Maori guests who include well-known entertainers, community leaders, politicians and restaurateurs.

Her very first show hosted Whirimako Black (who featured in the March/April issue of *NZ Life & Leisure*) who provided the theme music for the *Kai Ora* series. Whirimako's involvement set the scene for bringing gifts and koha and for adding the dimension of "singing for your supper" to the show, another concept of manaaki. ▶



Rewana, Maori bread.



Former Kiwi league star Matt Rua (left) and Shaun Davis.



Anne's lunch guests include (from left front) Michael Barrymore, Jack Bourke, Shaun Davis, Gabrielle Binning (obscured), Matt Rua, Jack Gilchrist and Amokura Panoho.



For Anne, aroha is the essential ingredient in her cooking and she advocates the need to connect heart with hands when preparing food. "Otherwise the food has a bland, less appealing feel about it." Being involved in all aspects from preparing food to serving her guests is where Anne has extended her business acumen. With commercial kitchens in both her Pakiri beach house and her Auckland home in Herne Bay, she creates intimate spaces that can accommodate an All Black engagement party or an international celebrity dinner.

Both homes reflect Anne's appreciation of life and her desire to project her version of manaakitanga. While at Pakiri, though not tribally connected (she is of Ngati Awa and Ngai Te Rangi descent), she fosters close relationships with the tangata whenua and at home in Herne Bay she is constantly visited by family, friends and associates who provide her with inspiration and support.

It is obvious that coming from a large family has helped shape Anne's personality. With seven siblings and an extended family, she took on preparing meals for them at the age of 10 and thus paved the way for her future in the culinary arts. "We had limited resources but I had the opportunity to plan a menu that met our budget. My interest in food preparation extended to food presentation and things have gone on from there."

It was Anne's personality that persuaded John McCready, CEO of the Living Channel and Food TV, to feature the *Kai Ora* series. "Anne has produced a very good cooking programme and its broad appeal is that it is a very New Zealand programme, not just a Maori programme. As a result it has set the benchmark for other New Zealand food programmes on our channel." ▶